During 2007-08 the State Government of Tamil Nadu approved the project 'Establishment of Automatic Weather Station' in its State Level Sanctioning Committee Meeting held on 15.12.2007. Out of the total allocation of Rs.188.21 crore a sum of Rs.153.60 crore was released to the State Government under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) which includes Rs.17.31 crore for Establishment of the proposed Automatic Weather Stations.

The State Government has not approved any project regarding Automatic weather stations in Tamil Nadu during 2008-09.

The State Government of Tamil Nadu has reported that upto March, 2009, they have established 224 Automatic Weather Stations in the State.

Agricultural growth

1489. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agriculture growth during February to April 2009 nose-dived compared to that during corresponding period of last year 2008, inspite of several steps taken by Government; and

(b) if so, the comparative Agricultural growth figures during these quarters of 2009 and 2008 and the reasons for the fall?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Percentage growth in Agriculture and Allied sector during IVth quarter (January to March) in 2008-09 has increased to 2.7 from 2.2 during the same quarter in previous year. The quarterly growth rate in Agriculture and Allied sector at constant prices (1999-2000) according to data released in the month of May, 2009 by Central Statistical Organization are given below:

Year	Percentage growth rate			
	1st quarter (April-June)	IInd quarter (July-September)	IIIrd quarter (October-December)	IVth quarter (January-March)
2007-08	4.3	3.9	8.1	2.2
2008-09	3.0	2.7	-0.8	2.7

However, the overall decline in growth rate from 4.9% in 2007-08 to 1.6% in 2008-09 is maily due to decline in production of wheat, coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sugarcane.

Adverse effect on sale of coconut oil due to subsidy and custom duty relaxation given to palm oil

1490. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN:
SHRI K.E. ISMAIL:
Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) how much customs duty relaxation was given to palm oil during the last three years;

(b) the total expenditure incurred due to the subsidy given to palm oil;

(c) whether Government considers extending the subsidy to coconut oil; and

(d) whether it has come to the notice of Government that subsidy given to imported palm oil is adversely affecting the domestic sale of coconut oil?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Details of customs duty changes on imports of palm oil during the last 3 years is as under:-

Sl. No.	Date from which applicable	Applicable rate of the Customs duty on Crude Palm (ad valorem)	Applicable rate of the Customs duty on Refmd Palm Oil (ad valorem)
1.	11.08.2006	70%	80%
2.	24.01.2007	60%	67.5%
3.	13.04.2007	50%	57.5%
4.	23.07.2007	45%	52.5%
5.	21.03.2008	20%	27.5%
6.	01.04.2008	Nil	7.5%

(b) A "Scheme for Distribution of subsidised imported edible oils through States/Union Territories had been implemented during 2008-09. The Scheme ended on 31.3.2009. Under the Scheme, Refined Bleached Deodorized (RBD) palmolein and refined soyabean oil had been packed in 1 litre/ or ½ litre had been given to States by designated Public Sector Undertakings. The subsidy had been Rs. 15 per Kg of packed edible oil handed over to the States till 20th January 2009 and thereafter, the subsidy was increased to Rs.25/- per kg up to 31.3.2009. The total expenditure incurred under subsidy on imported edible oils handed over to States is Rs. 424.25 crores. The expenditure incurred due to subsidy given to RBD palmolein under the Scheme was Rs. 403.47 crores.

(c) The Scheme envisages subsidy for only imported edible oils. The scheme ended on 31.3.2009. The Government does not consider extending the subsidy to coconut oil.

(d) It has not come to the notice of Government that subsidy given to imported palm oil (RBD palmolein) is adversely affecting the domestic sale of coconut oil.

Introduction of GM Food and GM Technology

1491. SHRI BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government intends to introduce genetically modified (GM) food and GM technology in food crops;